2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

881 539 together. We are imploring you, the village people, we were like crows, we have become white like peddybirds; you village people be witnesses.

Now they drink beer, and commencing to sing chaṭiar and dąñ songs they dance. Then all is finished.

Song.

O, the sirom ear had been formed.
Of the woman such and such a girl was born.

O, the marâr buah[12] had blossomed,
The boy so and so was born.

The plump one, the stout one,
The little parakeet, the little starling,
The sucking boy, the sucking so and so,
Bring the two down at once,
The little parakeet, the little starling.

c. Of the burnt-mark.

304 [775] The ancestors of old said that if any one did not get the burnt-mark, in the other world they would put in their arms a caterpillar big as a log; therefore all boys will diligently stand the pain. Some persons take only one burnt-mark, some three, some five, and some take seven burnt-marks. They get the burnt-mark on the left arm. The burnt-marks are made in the following way: They make a roll of a rag like a cigar. They set fire to this at the top end and put it down on the spot where the burnt-mark is to be. It burns slowly down. When it is burnt out the person who makes the mark quickly presses the ashes down on the spot. Then a blister forms and it becomes a sore. When this heals the burnt-mark is there.

d. Of tattooing.

[562] [775] Women do not take burnt-marks; they let themselves be tattooed, in order that in the other world they shall not put a caterpillar big as a log into their arms. They are tattooed on the breast. There are no special figures, only something indefinite, to look beautiful. First they draw with a bit of wood and soot-ink, and afterwards they prick with a needle along the pattern. When tattooing is done, they smear turmeric on, and they go and bathe.

[12] Erythrina Indica, Lam.

2; Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

k. Forcibly applying sindur.

583 To apply sindur to any girl without cooperation of the village community is called iputut. This is of two kinds. Sometimes a young man will apply sindur to a girl with her knowledge and consent, and sometimes they apply the sindur without right or reason. If a young man and a girl wish it, and they have agreed, while the parents of the girl are unwilling to bestow her on the young man, then the young man will forcibly apply sindur to the girl, after the two have talked together and decided on it. If a young man has fallen in love with a girl, and he has doubts: who knows whether they will bestow her on me or not, or whether the girl will be pleased with me or not, then the young man will apply sindur to the girl without telling her and without giving any warning. And sometimes it also happens that they defile a girl in anger, to make her become a divorcee.

[775] People say, it is told, that only the spinsters they marry will they get in the next world — but not widows or divorcees —; therefore it sometimes happens when a man's first wife is a widow or a divorcee, that in order to get a wife in the next world, he will marry or apply forcibly sindur to a spinster, whether he afterwards keeps her as his wife or not; he has made way for himself in the next world.

When a young man is going to apply sindur forcibly to a girl, he puts sindur in a leaf in a fold of his cloth, and going to a place where they fetch water or to a plain where the hook-swinging or some other festival is going on, he without warning smears the sindur on the girl's forehead. If he has no sindur, it may be done also with earth or lime. Also during a festival or when they are fetching leaves and firewood or leaves, they forcibly apply sindur to a girl. If a girl has got sindur forcibly applied to her, she has, according to the law, become the wife of the man who did it. And if she does not stay with him, she becomes a divorcee. [576]

When a young man has forcibly applied sindur to a girl, he will at once run away, fearing that the father and male relatives of the girl will thrash him. When the father and male relatives of the girl get to know that sindur has been forcibly applied to her, they become furious, and calling the village people together they go with bows and arrows to the young man's house to "follow the bloody tracks"[1]. First they go to the headman of that village and tell him. He says to them: Please act for us in accordance with custom. They then enter the young man's courtyard and beat every single water-pot into pieces, and entering the house they break their cooking vessels and the fireplace to pieces and scatter them, and if they find the young man there, they bind him and beat him, so that he lies there done for, they leave him only his life, — thereupon they lay him down in the middle of the courtyard and go to hunt for castrated goats or pigs. If they find goats, they kill two with a battle-axe, and if pigs, they shoot and kill two with bow and arrow. Thereupon they go to the cattle-herd to seize some cattle. They drive some three pairs

[1] A common expression used about the forcible application of sindur to a girl, is that a leopard has clawed her; this may be another way of showing their attitude towards the act.

Z: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

XII. ABOUT THE OTHER WORLD

975

Our ancestors of old have said: Ṭhakur has sent us to the world; he has himself measured out to us our seer, and when this seer is finished for us, he takes us away to the other world. There he judges about our good and bad deeds and gives us a place in accordance with them. They who were good get a good place there, and they who were bad in this world, they get a bad place. The bongas or mountain-spirits have no authority over good people; but to the persons who were bad they give an awful amount of suffering. When I lived in the village Asonlea in the Paṇḍra country, I was dead for three days, after having been ill. Old Buḍhan and old Jugia, now of Citragaria, lived at that time in that village. They both know this. When I died, I went to the other world, to a bad place. There was a very large door into that prison-house. When I had gone inside, they at once shut the door. I saw a very large house, big like a country. I saw places for inflicting different kinds of suffering. I saw a cavity like an immense trench for cooking. There was fire in this, and in this fire-cavity a countless number of persons were thrown down. Climbing with hands and feet they were trying to get up and out of it; but Marnâ buru was stabbing them, meeting them with an iron fish-spear; thereby they were getting still more suffering.

Seeing this I became awfully afraid and was fidgeting to get out; I was unable to get out, because the door was shut, and soldiers were standing at the door. Just then they opened the door to bring a new person in. O mother, I saw that from my body and outside a thin thread was stretched out! Catching hold of this thread I at once crossed under their feet and came out. I escaped, I ran all I could; I came back to the world; I got well.

People say, it is reported, that what different kinds of sins they have committed in this world, they have in the other world an awful wish to commit the same sins; but they do not get an opportunity of sinning, so that they feel great distress there. They who in this world covet meat much, these persons, it is told, in the other world all day long carry meat on their head, smelling offensively; it is a strong smell; they are unable to eat. They who have not in this world paid their debts before they leave, of them they demand payment in the other world, and as they have nothing to pay with, they flay their back and sow salt there, and when it heals, they do the same to them over again.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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881 304 [801] that the first sign means *Iìòn* (life) and the next *Màròn* (death), the third *Iìòn* and the fourth *Màròn* and so on. He does not, one can easily guess why, want to close with death. So he hits upon an odd number of *Sika* marks, which will ensure him "life". [975] If this ceremony is not performed, the Santal believes that in his life hereafter, huge worms shaped like their giant drums (*tumdak'*)[1] will sit on his lap and eat him up. No particular religious ceremony, however, attends the *Sika*, which is confined to men only. The women generally wear tattoo marks on their palms, arms and some on their breasts.

Tattoo marks on women (or Khoda)

Santal women, in Mayurbhanj, generally wear several tattoo marks on wrists, near the end of their forearm and on the chest. As regards the nature of these marks, there is nothing special to the Santals to connect these with their traditional history, as has been traced concerning the Kharias. The characteristic common design was found to be that of the sun, amongst a variety of birds and other

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[534] 1 Ref. Tumdak', a kind of drum. The body of the drum is of burnt clay, the end beaten by the left hand is of bullock's hide, and that beaten by the right hand is of goat's skin, the whole is laced with strips of bullock's hide. (page 676, Dr. Campbell's *Santali to English Dictionary*.)

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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304 that tattoo marks are not merely a body-decoration.
881 They are as much necessary to women, as cicatrization (or sika) to Santal men. Should a woman be
[606] without her tattoo-signs, her mother-in-law will
[775] refuse to accept her as a daughter of the house; and should such a woman die, before she was ceremonially given these marks, *Iòm Raja* (god of death) will take her to be impure and punish her in Hell. That the Santals consider tattooing as a social and religious necessity, and its omission an offence, cannot be contested in view of the wide prevalence of the custom through the length and breadth of the Santal areas.

Conclusion

105 In course of the preceding pages, we have noticed the "Rites de passage", the ceremonies and rituals attendant on child-birth, cicatrization of men and tattooing of women. The various formalities with which the new-born babe is ushered into the society have their own meaning. The society, that has an economic background, built up an elaborate clan-life, singularly homogeneous in its totality and component parts. It organised a social constitution for orderly existence and propagation of the species from biological instincts. So, when a new-comer is on the threshold of the tribe, steps are taken to protect him from unknown and supernatural dangers.

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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elders. The men-folk are shaved and, thereafter, both men and women repair to the *jòl-ghat* (public bath). Coming back, two men again impersonate *Maraṅ Buru* and the deceased, and are offered *hàṇḍia ràsi* (the best part of rice-beer); fowls and goats are sacrificed in their honour in the yard. A meal is prepared with rice and offered inside the house, while the villagers are plied with rice-beer and treated to a feast. The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided in a peculiar way, the villagers being entitled to the upper side when it was felled on the ground, the lower falling to the share of him who provided it.

The ceremonies conclude at Mayurbhanj with *Kandh Bhojani*, when some Santals, impersonating Brahmins and Vaishnavs, are fed by the family, and *Bhandar Bodh*, which requires a barber, similarly acting his part, to be presented with rice and meat showing undoubted influences of Hinduism.

IDEAS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

At this stage, we think it will be instructive to give the reader some idea about the Santal's belief in a life hereafter.

The Heaven (*Serma disom*, lit. sky-country) is situated up in the blue skies. It is also called *Svòròg*. There the gods, *Maraṅ Buru* (the Chief Presiding Deity) and others live. At times they also

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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come down to earth. When after a man's death, his *jaù baba* (bones) are thrown into the sacred river, Damodar, his *mul* (shadow, soul) goes up to *Serma disom* or *Svòròg* (Heaven). There it is that the virtuous ones remain, enjoying heavenly bliss along with the gods themselves.

Those who were sinners on the earth, are consigned to *Nòròk* (Hell). It is a very painful place where big worms feed perpetually on those thus punished, and a variety of other tortures are also provided (e. g. they may be ordered to unweave the knots of a net). *Nòròk* (Hell) is the abode of *Jòm Raja* (King of Death), who takes away the sinners from the earth and imprisons them there. The men and women, who go there, without their cicatrization and tattoo-marks respectively, are made to sit with their hands outspread, and they are then made to embrace (*bòbòr*) huge drum-sized worms, by the regents of the nether-world. When these worms move, the prisoners undergo painful torture.

As regards the period of such punishment and re-birth on earth for those who are consigned to Hell, some believe that they are born again as beasts and birds on the earth. But if their sin is washed away completely, they can have re-birth as men. Others are disposed to believe that the sinners never come back to earth as men, but only as birds and beasts.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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775 In the cases of the rest (viz. those in Heaven), they have to stay there till the third generation. To make the position clear, we should remember that the Santals worship ancestor-spirits upto the grandfather (inclusive). When with the death of the house-holder and the consequent change in generations, the particular man in *Serma* (Heaven) does not any more receive propitiation on earth, his period of stay lasts till then. To illustrate the matter, let us take a concrete case. A house-holder worships ancestor-spirits upto his grandfather X. When the house-holder dies and becomes an ancestor-spirit himself, X becomes a great-grandfather to the son of the house-holder (now dead) and is re-born on the earth.

Conclusion

76 77 Such in brief are the funeral ceremonies, and the ideas of Heaven and Hell obtaining amongst the Santals. In all the ceremonials attending death, the members of the tribe take all possible precautions so that the released spirit may not haunt the abode of his near and dear ones, and may be admitted by the gods after proper purification. The other aim of the rituals is to see that the spirit may have rest, after all the toils and turmoils of 761 life, along with the ancestors. It is with a supernatural fear that the Santal looks upon death, the

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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776 married quickly. For propitiation, she needs a
[782] brown hen (*Herak' Sim*); and if a goat is sacrificed in her honour, it must be a red she-goat.

776 In course of our investigations at Mayurbhanj,
778 we were shown stones in the *Jabèrthan* (Holy Grove)
346 which were supposed to represent these deities. During all public festivals, huts are raised to worship them suitably. It was stated that in Mayurbhanj three huts are raised ; one to house "Jahèr era," "Marań Buru" and "Mònrènko," a second for "Gosane era," and the third for another village deity, "Mañjhi Haṛam." But there are instances when a fourth one is insisted on by younger folk, to honour the younger brother of Mañjhi, called "Hudiñ Mañjhi Haṛam." In our references to the
[184] practice in the Santal Parganas (e.g. *Baba*, Santal Sal-blossom festival) we have seen that only "Jahèr era," "Gosane era," "Marań Buru," and "Mònrènko" have huts for them in the Holy Grove. Mañjhi has his place no doubt, but he is worshipped at the *Mañjhithan*, a separate shrine in the village.

776 As a matter of fact Mañjhi Boṅga may be
[775] supposed to represent the spirits of dead Mañjhis (village Headman). But he is only second to another dignitary, "Pargana," who has power over witches.
[184] Both of these are village-deities, although they may not find a place in the *Jabèrthans* of Mayurbhanj Santals.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Jam Jati: By performing this ceremony an outcasted Santal is accepted back into society. It is done in the following way :—

When both the aggrieved parties are ready to provide the necessary money for the performance of this ceremony they inform the Manjhiharam who again informs the Parganait of the Bunglow, and the latter makes it known to the Parganaits of other neighbouring bunglows. Then a day is fixed for the performance of this ceremony and the person who is to be re-admitted prepares a big feast. Then the outcasted man and woman go out to the end of the village street with a twisted cloth round their necks, and water in a lota. To the Parganaits and the village chiefs the offenders acknowledge their offence and pray to them, "Have pity on us". The Parganaits and the chiefs say "Since you have acknowledged your offence we do now take and carry all that for you". Then the outcasts take a little water and wash their mouths with it and pass the lota round to all the leading men, who do the same. After this they enter the village and the court-yard of the outcasts who personally wash the feet of the leaders of the people. All then sit down in rows to eat, leaf plates being put before them. On the leaf-plates of the parganaits Rs. 10 is put, on the Desmanjhis' plates Rs. 5 and on those of the headmen also Rs. 5.

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Disposal of the Dead: When a person is dying they generally keep the doors open, as the Santals prefer to have the spirit of the departed wandering about outside the house than taking a permanent abode inside. This is probably one of the reasons why the Manjhisthan is built, as it affords a residence to the manes of the

4: Biswas .D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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departed ; although this Manjhisthan is build before the house of the headman of a village yet it seems that the spirits of all deceased villagers are commonly considered to congregate there.

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After death, the body is carried on a bedstead by the relatives and villagers who cover the body with a new shroud. When they reach a cross road some [782] parched rice and cotton seeds are scattered about as a charm against the malignant spirits that might throw obstacles in the way. On that cross road they wait for an hour and the women and relations lament over the deceased. They carry the dead body to the bank of a streamlet nearby. The clothes, brass utensils and weapons of the departed are brought with the dead body. These things are sold at half price near the [432] pyre. The pyre is prepared with the wood which is [768] brought from the jungle nearby. Before placing the dead body on the pyre, the heir of the deceased with his face averted and walking backwards inserts a piece of grass between the lips of the dead man and places a silver coin in his hand. The dead body with the bedstead is placed on the funeral pyre and a small chip is taken off the collar-bone and deposited in a new pot and the heir then applies fire to the dead body by placing a piece of burning wood on the face of the corpse. Before setting fire to the body it is covered with a branch and four pieces of wood are put on it. A fowl is taken round the pyre thrice and is finally nailed to the south-west corner pole. After the heir has placed a piece of burning wood on the dead man's face, all the relatives and others present throw a log on the pyre and proceed to kindle it. The people sit at a

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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764 distance and watch the body being consumed. The pot in which the bit of the collar-bone is kept, is then buried outside the village. Then they shave and bathe and before they enter the village smear themselves with sal resin The men who carried the dead man and also those who accompanied the dead to the cremation ground drink handi bought with the money realised from the dead man's articles. Coming back after cremating the body they hang a pot of leaves in the room where the man had breathed his last. In a cup they put some boiled rice and above the rice they place another pot containing fried fish. If the next morning some boiled rice can be seen on the fish then they think the spirit of the departed came and partook of a portion of the rice. But if no rice can be seen then they think that the spirit did not come. In this case they believe that something of the departed is left with them, that is why the spirit did not come.

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765 After five days there is a ceremony called Tel nahan. All the villagers assemble at the dead man's house and shave. Then they go and bathe, the men in one place, the women in another. The men take with them a little earth (used as soap), oilcake, oil, three sal twigs (used as tooth-brushes) and a couple of leaves. The villagers put these at the edge of the water on three separate leaves, and offer all with the left hand first to the dead, then to Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Burhi (first man and woman). The last two are invoked to take the dead man under their care. The Santals keep a little bone to throw in the water of the Damodar river. There is no fixed time for taking the bones to that river. It is the custom of the Santals to wait

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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tell him 'Now let us hear the oracle'. The *Jan* then takes his fee which is a rupee and tells them the name of a *bonga* or a witch who is at the bottom of their troubles.

Then they return to their village. If the *Jan* says that a *bonga* is giving the trouble then the patient will promise sacrifice. If the *Jan* declares any woman to be a witch, this woman is harassed in every possible way, fined and driven out of the village, and at times killed.

At present the *Jans* are, according to Santal belief, not like the old righteous ones. The *Jans* of ancient time got their knowledge through dreams at night or through visions in the daytime, not possessed by a divination spirit like *Jans* of the present day. Now-a-days the *Jans* keep informers who find out and tell them all particulars. *Jans* of to-day are very careful in fixing the blame. They generally fix the blame on some *bonga* or other in preference to a witch.

Classification of the supreme, superior and supernatural beings: It is very difficult to attempt a classification of the orders of the supernatural beings which constitute the religious belief of a community. The classification would often imply the existence of a notion of hierarchy of the supernatural beings, one being far superior to the rest. It is curious to observe that this supreme being is never worshipped in the faith that he can never work out any evil. As for the rest the rank may be determined in the order in which worship is offered to them. But here again the difficulty would lie in the fact that a particular occasion would demand predominance being given to particular spirits. Thus the classification would be more or less a division in parallel lines, for it

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would be hard to decide the superiority or inferiority of the ancestral spirits on the one hand and the departmental deities of nature on the other. However the following eight classes would differentiate the types of these supernatural beings in Santal belief. 776 [775]

1. The highest divinity recognised by the Santal is *Kando*, the Supreme Being, the Creator. He is the only one who can give and restore life and who has created the trees, plants, animals, etc.

2. The spirits of dead ancestors are placed by the Santals in a separate class by themselves. [775]

3. The next is composed of household spirits known as *Orak bongas* and tutelary spirits known as *Abge bongas*. The names of the *Orak bonga* are the following :

1. Baspahar. 2. Deswali. 3. Seas 4. Goraya
5. Barpahar. 6. Sarchawdi. 7. Thuntatursa.

The names of the *Abge bonga* are the following :

1. Darasore or Dharasanda. 2. Ketkomkudra 3. Champa denagarh.
4. Garsinka. 5. Lilachandi. 6. Dhanghara.
7. Kudracandi. 8. Barhara. 9. Duarseri.
10. Kudraj. 11. Gasain Era. 12. Achali
13. Deswali. 14. Pahardana.

It may be noted here that the Santal would not divulge the name of his *Orak bonga* and *Abge bonga* to any one but his eldest son and I was fortunate to get the names from the Christian converts.

4. The fourth class is the hunting spirit known as *Rongo ruji*, a bonga to whom worship is made on the

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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night before the men start for the annual tribal hunt with utterly obscene songs and practices.

5. The fifth class of spirits are the village deities, which are the following:

1. Jaher Era (female). 2. Gosain Era (female).
3. Truko Murnko (male). 4. Marang Buru (male).
5. Parganat (male).

The Santals worship the above deities periodically in the sacred grove.

6. There are spirits of the village boundary known as *Sima bongas*, and of the outskirt of the village known as *Bahre bongas*.

7. Next come tramp or stray spirits who are spirits of persons and children dying an unnatural death.

8. The spirit of the father-in-law's household, as is believed, sometime follows the bride to her new house which is known as *Naihar bonga*. As soon as a Santal is convinced that the *Naihar bonga* has come along he will either make yearly sacrifices to him, or, as there is some risk connected with it as one does not know the requirements of the foreign *bonga*, he will make arrangements to send him back at once, for by himself he will not return. If either is not done the consequences are disease and death in the house.

Another spirit that must be exercised[1] is *Kisar bonga*. The *Kisar bonga* is of a rather uncertain character. A man who has got such a *bonga* into his house will be wealthy through him as he steals from others and carries all to the house of his master, but if he is offended there is no end to the mischief he will make. If on his account disease is brought into a

1 [Erratum: this should read "exorcised." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

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the tables may be turned on those who lord it over them. In Bodding's collection of the Folk-Tales[1] there are two stories which turn on the fact that the bodies of high-caste strangers house the souls of animals, while the bodies of men of low caste house human and beautiful souls. (The means by which the real person can be discerned is to look at him through the wing feather of a vulture.) In common with other tribes of their group and many primitive peoples in other parts of the world, the Santals refer to themselves as "men" (*hor*). A Santal once said in reply to a direct question as to whether any other race was superior to his: "No, there are no others who are greater than us. You can see that from the fact that even today our womenfolk will not eat rice that has been cooked by Brahmins. Formerly, when our menfolk ate Hindu rice they were made to sleep outside for one night; they could not sleep with their wives. When they brought rice from outside to the house they were made to eat it in the courtyard and clean up the place where they had eaten, and then wash their own eating utensils." Many Santals work as day labourers in the fields of well-to-do caste Hindus and receive payment in grain or sometimes in cooked food. The cooks in the homes of their employers are Brahmins, and so by refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmin they hold themselves aloof from the Hindu social structure. Nevertheless, the complete aloofness of former days has been modified and is maintained only by the women. As one might expect, Santals share with others abhorrence of social customs which do not agree with their own standards of morality, and they exaggerate the iniquities practised by other peoples. The same person said: "When the *Deko* put out their lamps at night they have no sense of what is right and wrong. They respect no one, whether their younger brother's wife, elder brother's wife, their own sister or anyone else. Moreover, they do not respect any of their relations by marriage."

Many of the *Deko* make a living out of the Santal, as the cat finds its sustenance in his home. The analogy is by no means perfect, and its chief value for the Santal is that it ministers to his self-respect. In the Bankura district many of the landlords of the Santals are Sundis, who are themselves classified as an Exterior or Scheduled caste. Their hereditary occupation is the distilling and selling of spirits, and they are usually the lessees of the government liquor and drug shops. They owe their present

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Folk-Tales*, Vol. III, Nos. 74 and 77.

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behalf of a particular social unit, which is sometimes the whole village and sometimes as small as the family. Positively the goodwill of the *boŋgas* is retained by the observance of the due sacrifices, negatively by the observance of taboo rules. Many of the taboos operative in the daily life of the Santals can be directly traced to the necessity for safeguarding the interests of the *boŋgas*. The belief in the dangerous potentiality of women is reflected in the fact that all sacrifices are taboo for women in one sense or another. The fact that they may not eat the flesh of animals sacrificed to the *abge* has already been noted; they may not eat the flesh of any part of an animal sacrificed to *Maraŋ Buru*, nor the head of any animal killed in a sacrifice at all. Although they may help in the preparations for sacrifices performed in the house, they are kept away from participation in the sacred grove. No woman may climb any of the trees in the grove, nor may she be present when the sacrifices are made, nor eat of the flesh of any animal there offered. The one exception to this rule is that a portion of the flesh of sacrificed animals is reserved for the wife of the priest. Other taboos are related only indirectly to the belief in spirits. The code of behaviour between relatives is sanctioned by a belief that any infringement of its provisions will result in retaliation by the spirits, who cause such diseases as leprosy, or who will inflict dire punishment after death and make it impossible for funeral ceremonies to be duly carried out. Sometimes the retaliation acts swiftly, as in the case related by a Santal concerning an uncle. This relative was on a journey away from home. He stopped at a certain village to obtain a drink of beer, and in his haste, being exceedingly thirsty at the time, he omitted first of all to spill a few drops as a libation to *Maraŋ Buru* and his ancestors. This forgetfulness of a universal obligation was met apparently by almost immediate retribution. Soon after he had resumed his journey the man fell down—dead.

776 784 784 562 [262] [782] 784 602 [782]

The *boŋgas* can be distinguished both from the Supreme Being and from various other classes of spirits by the fact that there is between them and the Santals some degree of personal relationship. Many of the *boŋgas* do not seem to have any very marked personal characteristics, but the Santal knows that in the normal course of events he will himself become a *boŋga* and will be dependent then for his happiness on those who come after him. Unless he dies in certain specified ways, once his funeral rites have been completed he will take his place among the ancestors, and his place in the hierarchy of the spirit world depends very much on his social status and correct behaviour in this one. The

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CHAPTER 8

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(2)

776 THE tribal *boiigas* are the allies of the Santals in the struggle against adverse circumstances and untoward happenings, even though their influence is exercised mostly in a negative manner. Common interest as well as sentiment and tradition keep the human and the spirit partners together. There are, however, 775 other kinds of spirits with whom society through its accredited [171] representatives has no dealings. The belief in these latter spirits, the spirits of the malevolent dead and demons, is one which the Santals share with the peasantry of North India.[1] While there is much in the *boiiga* cult that is distinctive of the Santals, they seem to have absorbed the general beliefs of the region regarding spirits that are not worshipped but feared. They use the same terms as their neighbours and speak of *bhut*, *pret* and *curin*. These are the spirits of dead persons who have either died in some abnormal way or whose funeral ceremonies have not been completed. One Santal who was asked to describe the difference between the terms *bhut* and *boiiga* pondered his reply for a minute before saying: "Until the bones have been taken to the river all dead men are *bhuts*. These waylay people in the beds of streams. We fear them, and we do not look after them (*lit.* we do not feed them). We do look after the *boiigas*, and they work for us." Santals do not seem to have made up their minds whether suicides automatically become malevolent spirits or not. Some think that they do, while one Santal affirmed that as death was rarely ascribed to natural causes suicide was not peculiar, being merely one of the ways in which evil influences worked on men's minds. Childless men become ghosts, and this belief is due to the fact that a son is desired who will light the funeral pyre. The *curin* form a special class of female ghosts with terrifying appearance. They are the spirits of women who died in childbirth, or while they were pregnant and after their child had quickened in the womb, and whose corpses had then not been disposed of in the right [766] manner. Among the Santals, as among many other Indian [171] peoples, the husband is required to cut open his wife's body and remove the foetus from it so that it may be buried separately. *Curin* haunt the beds of streams, where they lie in

[1] William Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Oxford University Press, 1926, Ch. VII.

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wait for men. Women are protected from the designs of these ghosts by the iron bangle which they wear.

Ghosts of the dead and other private spirits who are given the title of *boŋga* form part of the stock-in-trade of the two classes of people among the Santals who deal regularly with the occult- the magicians and the witches. They are bitterly opposed to each other's influence, and they clash for the most part on the battleground of sickness and disease. An exhaustive treatise on the Santal attitude to disease has been published, and shows conclusively that, as with ghosts so with sickness, the ideas of the Santals are common to all the lower strata of society in North India.[1] These ideas are not simple but complex, and range from the realm of the rational to the fantastic. Disease is sometimes ascribed to natural causes, particularly when the chain of causation is fairly obvious and can be repeated in a series of experiments; there is a whole class of food described as *batol*, which means that it is unwholesome. There are hundreds of remedies that require no supernatural aid to make them effective. Some remedies are the property of all, while others are the property of individuals and the knowledge of their ingredients is a closely guarded secret. Chaitan of Churimara began his career as a physician in response to a specific need. When he was a young man a friend had come to him in great distress and said that his boy was vomiting blood. He turned to Chaitan and asked him if he knew of any medicine that would be good for the boy. Chaitan was so sorry for his friend that he promised to do something, although when he said this he had no notion what he should do. As he was setting out for his friend's house he prayed to *Cando* and asked that he might be shown what he ought to do; at the same time he shut his eyes and kicked at the soil. As he opened his eyes again he saw a plant, which he immediately dug up. He ground the roots to make a medicine, and the boy recovered from his sickness. Since then he has applied the same remedy to many other cases. One of his patients had been extremely ill, he said, but was now the father of four or five children! He has been in great demand as a physician, and claims that *Cando* subsequently revealed many remedies to him. Sometimes it is claimed that remedies are made known in dreams. The plant that was first revealed to Chaitan was the *upel tandi* plant, which has a red flower.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.

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765 769 the departed spirit who has now taken his place with the ancestors. His son remains under an obligation to name him at the time of the family sacrifices, and his widow owes to him and to herself certain marks of her widowhood. She wears no flowers or vermilion in her hair and she leaves off the iron bangle given her in marriage. Now, however, the family is free to resume normal relations with the world of men and of spirits, for once again they can marry and give in marriage.

761 Death is essentially an interruption of the normal processes of living. In the conditions under which the Santals live it is often sudden in its onslaught; it descends upon a house unexpectedly and usually as a cruel visitant, for the number of those who live to enjoy a peaceful old age is small. It is never due to accident, for this is a concept beyond the range of Santal philosophy, and the living take pains to discover the cause of every death that occurs, for their own protection. Unless steps are taken to prevent a recurrence it is common belief that at least three deaths will take place in quick succession. But it remains wrapped in [538] mystery. In one of the folk-tales it is told how a woman craved a boon from a holy man: "Give me this boon, to know where the *jivi* goes when we die and by what road does it deport, through the mouth or through the nose, and having departed where does it go? Give me to see what happens. Tell me also when I shall die and when I have died where will my *jivi* go?" Man is com- • 775 pounded of two different substances, *hormo*, or body, and *jivi*, or 828 soul; these are sometimes separated in dreams, and the final [774] separation in death is a fact that none can deny, but what [539] happens then? Death figures in many sayings that express the sense of the unknown. "In this life", runs one saying, "there is eating and drinking and the wearing of clothes. In the next life who knows what there is?" Some will tell that on death the soul [538] of man enters into a large lizard, the *ghinni*.[1] One story that has a wide currency tells of two men who lay down to rest at the foot of a tree. One of them fell asleep and the other was amazed to see a large lizard coming out of the mouth of his sleeping companion. When the latter awoke he said that in his dream he had been led to a place where treasure lay buried. Yet another common saying expresses scepticism concerning this belief. "Whether after death I shall become a common lizard, *kakya*, or a large lizard, I know not." This saying is used to give expression to the ancient materialist principle of behaviour: "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

[1] Probably *Tiliqua rubriventris*.

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DEATH

When a person is dying inside a house a great effort is made to remove him into the open before the *jivi* departs, for otherwise it will have difficulty in leaving the house, but the concern felt in this case is probably more on behalf of the living than the dead. The road by which the soul leaves the body is not known with certainty, for in addition to the nose or mouth it may depart through the ears, or, as I was informed in a case where a girl had died with her eyes staring wide open, "Her *jivi* went out through her eyes." Some of the ideas current about the future life have a moral content. There is at least an aspiration that the inequalities of this life will be rectified in the next. In the folk-tale quoted above[1] the boon was granted, and to the comfort of the woman who asked the questions she saw the soul of a poor man being treated with great respect, while the soul of a rich man, in this case her own father-in-law, was very roughly handled. Many such stories are told about the souls of Brahmins and men of low castes. Ideas are also held about punishment in the future life. This is reserved for those who have gone scot-free in this world. Those who were greedy are made to carry baskets of dung on their heads. Special tortures are also in store for those who wilfully shirk the payment of their debts, and above all for those who transgress the tribal code of sexual morality as well as for those who fail to show the traditional tribal marks on their bodies.

It would be surprising if any people in India did not show some trace of belief in reincarnation. The Santals accept it in a general way, but it has no great hold on their thinking. Hutton has inferred that the belief in reincarnation in India is a development from the theory of soul-matter or material life-substance of which he has found evidence through examining the cult of the dead among the hill tribes of Assam.[2] There is no need to hark back to such origins to account for the vague belief in reincarnation that is held by Santals at the present day. Every Indian village is able to furnish stories of recognition and memory which "prove" to the satisfaction of the villagers the assertion that men return to this earth in a different form after death, thus popularizing the doctrine of *karma*, which is one of the few beliefs universally accepted by Hindus and is one of the great achievements of Hindu thought. The Santals are surrounded by this atmosphere; accepting it, they repeat the stories which they hear and add others to the common stock. The

[1] See page 198.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Census Report of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Ch. XI.

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The custom of naming is not directly related to the belief in re-incarnation, for the names of grandparents and others are bestowed on children even though they are still alive. As we have seen, the spirits sometimes make their wishes known when they want a particular name to be given. This appears to be due to the fact that one of them feels that he has not been duly honoured rather than that the dead person in question has actually been born again in the person of the child.

The nature of the tie that binds *jivi* and *hormo* together remains obscure. *Jivi* is in a sense identified with the breath which departs from the body at death, but the identification is not complete, for the *jivi* may also leave the body during sleep and unconsciousness. In grammar the Santals distinguish between the animate and the inanimate. Bodding states: "One might be tempted to define the animate as that which has a 'substance' with something living, a living force, inside this, that makes it capable of acting and moving; a combination of 'matter' and a spirit or spirit force is demanded."[1] This cautious and tentative statement by the greatest authority on the Santali language illustrates the difficulty encountered when we try to reduce Santal belief to a system. When the word *jivi* is used alone with a predicate it is constructed as inanimate; on the other hand, anything possessed of *jivi* is regarded as animate.

Ancestor worship serves to keep the memory of the dead alive and welds the community of the living into one with those who have lived in the past. The dead go on a journey; but although they join the ancestors they are not far away, and their welfare is bound up with that of the tribe even as the welfare of the tribe is bound up with theirs. At the end of life people look forward to reunion with their loved ones. I well remember an old woman who was sunning herself one cold morning outside her house. I was passing through the village and stood to talk with her for a few moments. "Where is your husband?" I asked. "He is gone", she replied, indicating the sky; then she added: "I shall soon join him. He is building a house for the two of us, and when it is ready he will call me." Had she, I wondered, had a dream in which her dead husband had appeared to her? I did not ask and I have never learnt.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Materials for a Santali Grammar*, Pt. II, p. 49.